

## **PSY5270 Application of Counseling and Theology**

**Reformed Theological Seminary - Orlando**

Spring 2024

One (1) Credit Hour

### **Instructor**

Scott Coupland, PhD, LMFT

### **Contact Information**

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### **Office Hours**

By appointment

### **Course Meeting Time**

January 31 – May 1

Wednesdays, 1-3pm

### **Course Description**

This course is designed to help students demonstrate their ability to integrate and consolidate their thinking and positions on a variety of issues related to counseling. It will also familiarize students with critical topics, questions, and issues in arenas of both Christian worldview informed and nonfaith-based counseling settings. The intent is to prepare students to be able to respond to commonly asked questions they may have to answer in job interviews, from referral sources, or clients.

### **Course Objectives**

Students will:

- CO1.** Have organized their thinking and responses to issues and common questions often raised from within the church or from those within the field of professional counseling.
- CO2.** Be able to state their positions on counseling-related issues in a concise and understandable manner in language that will be understood by the church and the academy.
- CO3.** Be able to engage respectfully with other students on positions relating to topics and people in the field of counseling.
- CO4.** Have gained confidence in their ability to articulate their personal philosophy of counseling.

### **Methods of Instruction**

This course will be conducted in a seminar format. Class meetings will be used for the presentation and discussion of various counseling questions as they relate both to the church and the field of professional counseling. All students will participate in the research and writing of short summary papers on assigned questions. It is expected that all students will participate actively in order to help each other sharpen their understanding and ability to articulate relevant information on each topic presented.

## Assignments (Student Performance Evaluation Criteria)

### A1. Class attendance (10% of grade)

In order to address the 58 unique issues and questions that will be covered over the 13 weeks of class, it is imperative that students be in class and ready to engage in conversation promptly at 1:00 p.m. Students will earn 3 attendance points per class if they are on time for class (this means in a seat, computer on, and ready to talk). Students will earn 1 attendance point per class if they arrive to class after 1:00 p.m. Students will earn 0 attendance points if they miss class without an excused absence.

### A2. Participation in roundtable discussions (10% of grade)

The course format is completely dialogue-based. Interactive discussion of the assigned questions is the purpose of the class, so all students are expected to participate in the conversations. These discussions will help students: 1) consolidate their positions on the various questions, 2) be prepared for the oral exams during finals week, and more importantly, 3) be able to give cogent answers to questions they will likely face from employers, referral sources, and clients. **Students are expected to contribute a minimum of three significant comments per class period.** Students will earn up to 3 participation points per class period for their contributions to the discussions.

### A3. Counseling question papers (30% of grade)

Each student will be assigned a total of three questions from the list below of Christian worldview informed counseling and mental health counseling questions (see the addendum at the end of the syllabus). The schedule for assigned questions is available on Canvas. For each of these you will research and write brief (1-2 page) position papers.

These papers should be concise, thoughtful, and informed by reading/research. In-text citations and a minimum of three references (at least two scholarly, meaning the source is a book or peer-reviewed article, as opposed to online or popular resource like Psychology Today, blogs, Wikipedia, etc.) are required for all papers. Please note that while the bible can be quoted or referenced when appropriate, it does not count as one of your sources. The papers should reflect your integrated thoughts in writing and should not simply be cited quotes (do not overuse quoted material) or copy and paste material (this is plagiarism) from other writers.

**Upload your papers to Canvas by Fridays at 11:59 p.m., the week before the date you are assigned to lead a class discussion. It is critical that these are submitted on time because your classmates are required to read these prior to attending class.** Assignments turned in late will be deducted 1/3 letter grade for each late day (A lowered to A-, B+ lowered to B).

#### **\*\*Formatting Your Papers:**

- Use the question number (the number only) as the file name, title of your paper on the APA-style cover page of the paper, *and* at the top of the first page (e.g., "Question 8").
- Use the question itself as the first line of text at the beginning of your paper. Indent this line like you would a paragraph (e.g., "What is Christian counseling?")
- Use APA 7<sup>th</sup> edition formatting for your papers (use the APA template for this course provided on Canvas). Points will be deducted for APA errors. These papers are used to demonstrate your overall academic learning throughout the MAC program and therefore, standard academic writing is expected.

### A4. Reading (20% of grade)

Students will read the weekly papers (4-5 papers per week) written by classmates **prior** to attending class on Wednesdays. The intention of this is to promote thoughtful discussion during class. Students are required to go onto their Canvas account and record the total percent of reading they completed of all the papers for that week no later than 1:00 p.m., each Wednesday that the class meets.

### **A5. Oral exams (30% of grade)**

Students will be put into groups of 4-5 students for the two oral exams that will be given **on Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>**. (*Exact times will be assigned in class.*)

- On May 9, 2023 each group will appear for one hour before a local pastor and your professors and be asked to give verbal responds to random questions from the Christian counseling section of the issues and topics listed on this syllabus (questions 1-29).
- On May 14, 2023 the same procedure will occur, expect that the questions will come from the mental health counseling section of the issues and topics listed on the syllabus (questions 30-58), and the panel will consist of a local counseling professional and your professors.
- The assumed setting for both exams will be that of job interview. You will be graded on the quality and thoughtfulness of your responses.

### **A6. Course Evaluation (0% but completion required to pass the course)**

Course evaluations are crucial for assessing and improving the MAC program. Therefore, each MAC course includes an assignment to complete an anonymous online course evaluation. You will verify whether you have completed the evaluation through a quiz in Canvas. This will not count toward your grade, but it is necessary for successful completion of the course.

## **Required Course Materials**

The only assigned reading for this course is that are the position papers submitted by classmates for each week's class discussion (see A4 above). However, students will obtain whatever reading resources they need on their own as part of their research in writing their papers and studying for the oral exams.

## **Policies and Important Information**

**Written Work Format.** All written work must conform to current American Psychological Association (APA) style unless otherwise specified. If a student does not have a copy of the APA 7<sup>th</sup> edition manual, one should be purchased, or students may use one of the many APA style websites available online, for example: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/index.html)

Assessment of papers will include how well students represent their thoughts on paper, craftsmanship in writing, and organization of all written work.

**Disability Accommodation Policy.** If you have a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects your academic performance) and would like to receive academic accommodations, please inform your instructor prior to the start of this course. You must provide a letter from the Dean of Students that verifies your disabled status. The instructor and student will discuss the available accommodations for the course. If the student with a disability does not disclose that s/he has a disability, then the student is agreeing to take full responsibility for any related consequences that may occur.

**Access to Research Database.** RTS provides MAC students with access to the EBSCOhost *Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection* and *APA PsycArticles*. Links to the databases are available from the [RTS library website](#). If logging in from a computer away from the RTS campus, please follow the link below and log in with the username and password provided by the MAC program.  
<http://search.ebscohost.com/>

**Submission of work.** All assignments should be submitted on the Canvas course webpage.

**Late work.** All assignments are due as scheduled regardless of attendance unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor. Assignments turned in late will be deducted 1/3 letter grade for each late day (A lowered to A-, B+ lowered to B).

**Return of work.** All work will be returned to students via Canvas. Additionally, if students would like additional feedback, they may set up time before or after class to meet with the professor.

### **Grading Scale**

A = 97-100%	B- = 86-87%	D+ = 75-77%
A- = 94-96%	C+ = 83-85%	D = 72-74%
B+ = 91-93%	C = 80-82%	D- = 70-71%
B = 88-90%	C- = 78-79%	F = below 70%

**Attendance Policy.** Regular attendance is expected and required. Excessive absences (more than 1 class meetings) will result in the loss of points equal to one letter grade per absence. If serious illness or an emergency prevents a student from attending any class, please notify the instructor before the class begins. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain any materials handed out or presented during the missed class from a classmate.

**Class Participation.** Students are expected to participate in all components of the class. Each student is expected to read all the assigned materials in advance for each class and have prepared written comments and questions for class discussion. Contributions should reflect knowledge of the reading assignments or other sources.

## Course Process and Schedule

Due Date	Assignment / Class Topic	Assignment Due	Reading Quiz Due (by 1:00pm)
1/26/24	Papers due for class next week by 11:59pm	Chuck, Q. 1 Doug, Q. 2 Annabeth, Q. 3 Levi, Q. 4	
1/31/24	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers		Papers 1 through 4
2/2/24	Papers due for class next week by 11:59pm	Josiah, Q. 5 Yingxin, Q. 6 Alison, Q. 7 Karah, Q. 8	
2/7/24	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers		Papers 5 through 8
2/9/24	Papers due for class next week by 11:59pm	John, Q. 9 Lindsay, Q. 10 Jada, Q. 11 Joy, Q. 12	
2/14/24	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers		Papers 9 through 12
2/16/24	Papers due for class next week by 11:59pm	Annalea, Q. 13 Hope, Q. 14 Tyler, Q. 15 Rachel, Q. 16	
2/21/24	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers		Papers 13 through 16
2/23/24	Papers due for class next week by 11:59pm	Amy, Q. 17 Anneke, Q. 18 Josh, Q. 19 Heidi, Q. 20	
2/28/24	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers		Papers 17 through 20
3/1/24	Papers due for class next week by 11:59pm	Colby, Q. 21 Lily, Q. 22 Chuck, Q. 23 Doug, Q. 24	
3/6/24	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers		Papers 21 through 24
3/8/24	Papers due for class next week by 11:59pm	Annabeth, Q. 25 Levi, Q. 26 Josiah, Q. 27 Yingxin, Q. 28	
3/13/24	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers		Papers 25 through 28
	<b>Continued on next page</b>		

<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Assignment / Class Topic</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>	<b>Reading Quiz Due (by 1:00pm)</b>
3/15/24	Papers due for class next week by 11:59pm	Alison, Q. 29 Karah, Q. 30 John, Q. 31 Lindsay, Q. 32 Jada, Q. 33	
3/20/24	<b>Spring break, no class</b>	No papers due this week	
3/27/24	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers		Papers 29 through 33
3/15/24	Papers due for class next week by 11:59pm	Joy, Q. 34 Annalea, Q. 35 Hope, Q. 36 Tyler, Q. 37 Rachel, Q. 38	
4/3/24	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers		Papers 34 through 38
4/5/24	Papers due for class next week by 11:59pm	Amy, Q. 39 Anneke, Q. 40 Josh, Q. 41 Heidi., Q. 42 Colby, Q. 43	
4/10/24	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers		Papers 39 through 43
4/12/24	Papers due for class next week by 11:59pm	Lily, Q. 44 Chuck & Doug, Q. 45 Annabeth & Levi, Q. 46 Josiah & Yingxin, Q. 47 Alison & Karah, Q. 48	
4/17/24	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers		Papers 44 through 48
4/19/24	Papers due for class next week by 11:59pm	John & Lindsay, Q. 49 Jada & Joy, Q. 50 Annalea & Hope, Q. 51 Tyler & Rachel, Q. 52 Amy, Q. 53	
4/24/24	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers		Papers 49 through 53
4/26/24	Papers due for class next week by 11:59pm	Anneke, Q. 54 Josh, Q. 55 Heidi, Q. 56 Colby, Q. 57 Lily, Q. 58	
5/1/24	<b>Class:</b> Discussion of papers		Papers 54 through 58
5/9/24	<b>Oral Exam 1:</b>	On Christian-Worldview-Informed Counseling questions	
5/14/24	<b>Oral Exam 2:</b>	On Mental Health Counseling questions	

## **Addendum with Question Paper Topics**

### ***Christian Worldview Informed Counseling Questions***

***(Imagine a pastor or other Christian is talking to you and sincerely wants to understand the answer to these questions. They are not trying to attack your profession or being oppositional for the sake of it. They want to understand.)***

1. What is Christian counseling? How does your Christian faith inform what you do in the counseling room practically?
2. What is your understanding of the sufficiency of scripture, particularly as it relates to counseling?
3. Explain the concepts of common grace and general revelation. What is the significance of these to the counseling process?
4. Why do people need to deal with their pasts in counseling, especially considering a passage like Philippians 3:13-14: "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."?
5. Doesn't much of psychology simply justify people's sin instead of calling sin "sin"? When is mental illness sin and when is it not?
6. Why do Christian counselors focus so much on feelings or emotions, when the Bible seems to focus more on truth, repentance, and obedience?
7. Do people need to forgive themselves? Do people need to love themselves? Are those biblical concepts?
8. Conceptually and practically speaking, how is counseling a non-Christian different from counseling a Christian? What does evangelism look like in the context of counseling a non-Christian?
9. How do you justify counseling outside of the church; that is, outside the authority of a pastor or elder board? Aren't counselors just circumventing the role of authority of the pastor or church leadership in this kind of situation?
10. How can a Christian counselor justify charging so much money for discipling someone?
11. The counseling concept of confidentiality seems to go against the authority of the church and church discipline. How do you justify keeping information away from the very body of leaders God ordained to deal with shepherding his people? How can Christian counselors partner with pastors in caring for the body of Christ?
12. How can John Frame's *triperspectival* framework of knowledge aid you in dealing with cases of marital separation, divorce, and remarriage?
13. How would you respond to a client that says, "I'm depressed and praying against a demon of depression," and then quotes Ephesians 6:12: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."
14. A pastor asks: "It seems like Christian counselors are more concerned with state requirements for licensure and secularly defined ethical roles than truly biblical ethics of care." How would you respond?
15. The ordinary means of grace are the Word of God, fellowship (including the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper), and prayer. How do you incorporate the means of grace into your counseling?
16. How would you define emotional health and spiritual health? Justify biblically/theologically how these are the same or different?
17. What is the significance of understanding humanity's dignity and depravity in counseling?
18. What are the important elements of your theology of change in the context of counseling?

19. A person who has been faithfully following Christ for 20 years yet still struggles with “X” sin asks you, “Do people ever really change?” What is your response? What hinders or stops people from changing?
20. What is the significance of grieving/lament/mourning (*synonyms*) in a Christian view of healing?
21. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the counseling process?
22. What are your larger counseling goals in working with a person navigating concerns regarding their sexual identity, orientation, and/or attractions?
23. In the context of a counseling session, an adult female client reports being lured into a sexual relationship with a pastor or elder in your church. How would you respond to the client? What ethical issues are at play?
24. A client is struggling with abuse from her past. She feels guilty because she feels angry with God but thinks this is sinful. How do you respond to her concern?
25. What is the role of forgiveness in counseling? What does forgiveness look like when a person has been deeply wounded by another person? What is the relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation?
26. What is your understanding of shame and guilt? What is the relationship of shame to idolatry?
27. Name three strengths and three concerns about “Biblical Counseling” in the CCEF (Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation) and/or ACBC (Association of Certified Biblical Counselors) models of counseling?
28. From a Christian perspective, evaluate the role of 12-step programs in healing from substance abuse disorders. For Christian clients, would you recommend Celebrate Recovery rather than AA/NA?
29. A pastor asks you if you, as a counselor, are an integrationist. How would you respond?

### ***Mental Health Counseling Questions***

***(Imagine you are interviewing for a counseling position in a secular setting or interviewing for a PhD program.)***

30. How does your religion inform what you do in the counseling room?
31. Describe your theory of counseling. (Discuss the counseling model(s) [e.g., Internal Family Systems, The Interpersonal Process Approach, Psychodynamic] and concepts [e.g., attachment theory, mindfulness, transference and countertransference]) from which you draw conceptually and practically, and how you integrate them together.)
32. *How* would the theory and/or techniques of short-term/brief counseling approaches (e.g., CBT, solution-focused therapy, DBT) fit within your model of counseling?
33. What does it mean to have an eclectic or integrative approach to counseling theories?
34. What do research findings indicate about the importance of common factors across various approaches to counseling as related to the effectiveness of treatment?
35. Does a person need to deal with their past history in order to be healthy/grow? Why or why not?
36. Explain the key features of a scientifically-informed, biopsychosocialspiritual approach to assessment and case conceptualization.
37. What are the important elements of a treatment plan? How does it continue to inform your ongoing work?
38. How does crisis counseling differ from typical counseling?
39. If a client told you that he or she was romantically attracted to you (i.e., erotic transference), how would you respond? If you found yourself romantically attracted to a client (i.e., erotic countertransference), how would you address this? **Sexual misconduct vs sexual/romantic attraction**



40. Would you use social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, *YouTube*) or other electronic means of communication (e.g., email, texting) to (1) communicate with clients, or (2) advertise your counseling practice? Why or why not?
41. What ethical, legal, and clinical considerations should be addressed when deciding if a client is appropriate for telemental health services?
42. What makes a counselor culturally competent and responsive? How have you sought to improve your cultural competence and responsiveness?
43. Discuss the skill of broaching the subjects of race, ethnicity, and culture during the counseling process. Address the four commonly discussed broaching components of (a) timing, (b) language, (c) broaching goals, and (d) similarities (bridging) and/or differences.
44. Exposing, without imposing, clients to the counselor's values is an ethical cornerstone of counseling. Discuss the counseling skill of *value bracketing* in your response. Choose an example and share how you have addressed a value conflict with a client.
45. What is a gender and sexual minority (GSM)? What ethical considerations are at play when you provide counseling to clients with sexual, affectional, intersex, or gender expansive identities seeking help in their partner/spousal relationships?
46. How do social justice and client advocacy fit into your role as a mental health counselor?
47. How would you counsel a client seeking help to come out their family as a sexual minority?
48. How would you counsel a woman who reports a history of having had one or more abortions, or presents with an unwanted pregnancy? What ethical issues would you consider?
49. You are assigned a client that works with your spouse/partner. What issues would you consider as to whether you should see this person for counseling? If you decided to meet with the person for counseling, would you address his/her connection to your spouse/partner? If so, how?
50. What are the benefits of and problems with making DSM-5-TR diagnoses?
51. Why is medication important for some clients to progress in their counseling? How should you handle discussions of client medications as a part of your work as a counselor?
52. Regarding assessment tools: (a) what is your rationale for their use, (b) when is it clinically appropriate to use them, and (c) what are guidelines for offering feedback of results to clients. Give a brief example of how you have used an assessment tool with a client.
53. What are the legal and ethical guidelines for assessing the neglect or abuse of a child (or vulnerable adult) and appropriate procedures for reporting neglect or abuse to the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF)?
54. How would you assess a client's level of suicide ideation? What ethical and clinical procedures would you follow given a report of suicidal ideation (either active or passive)?
55. Choose a neuroscience concept that you have learned, briefly describe, and then give an example of how you have used (or how you would use) this concept with a client.
56. What are the advantages and professional benefits of being a member of a professional counseling organization? Select two such organizations that you would consider joining and explain why you would pick them specifically.
57. Give two examples of how you have used mindfulness techniques to help someone struggling with anxiety. What empirical evidence supports your use of these mindfulness techniques?
58. What is the difference between professional counseling and life coaching? Is it ethical to practice life coaching if you are a licensed counselor?



### Course Objectives Related to MAC Student Learning Outcomes

Course: PSY5270 Application of Counseling and Theology

Professor: Dr. Scott Coupland

Campus: Orlando

Date: Spring 2024

<b><u>MAC Student Learning Outcomes</u></b>	<b><u>Rubric</u></b>	<b><u>Mini-Justification</u></b>
<i>In order to measure the success of the MAC curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MAC outcomes.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Strong</li> <li>➤ Moderate</li> <li>➤ Minimal</li> <li>➤ None</li> </ul>	
<b><u>FOUNDATIONS</u></b> Understands and applies the basic knowledge needed to be an effective counselor including: the history and philosophy of counseling/soul care, a variety of counseling models and theories, ethics and professional standards of practice, and a psychological, biblical and theological framework for counseling/soul care.	Moderate	Students write position papers and take oral exams demonstrating their understanding of a variety of counseling models and techniques.
<b><u>COUNSELING, PREVENTION, AND INTERVENTION</u></b> Able to describe and apply the principles of mental and spiritual health, including prevention, intervention, consultation, education, and advocacy, as well as the operation of programs and networks that promote mental health in a cultural/global society.	Moderate	Students write position papers and take oral exams demonstrating their knowledge of intervention models and skills.
<b><u>DIVERSITY AND ADVOCACY</u></b> Understands and demonstrates how living in a cultural/global society affects clients who are seeking clinical mental health counseling services, as well as the effects of sin such as racism, discrimination, sexism, power, privilege, and oppression on one's own life and career and those of the client.	Moderate	Students write position papers and take oral exams demonstrating their understanding of racial, ethnic, and cultural issues.
<b><u>ASSESSMENT</u></b> Understands and applies various models and approaches to clinical evaluation and their appropriate uses, including diagnostic interviews, mental status examinations, symptom inventories, and psychoeducational and personality assessments, and is sensitive to the complications of diagnosis and interpretation of formal and informal evaluation.	Minimal	Students write position papers and take oral exams demonstrating their awareness of commonly used assessment tools.
<b><u>RESEARCH AND EVALUATION</u></b> Understands and demonstrates the ability to critically evaluate research relevant to the practice of clinical mental health counseling through a biblical worldview.	Minimal	Students write position papers and take oral exams demonstrating their understanding of the application of evidence-based practice in counseling.
<b><u>DIAGNOSIS</u></b> Knows and applies the principles of the diagnostic process, including differential diagnosis, and the use of current diagnostic tools, such as the current edition of the <i>Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)</i> , and evaluates them through a biblical and theological framework.	Moderate	Students write position papers and take oral exams demonstrating their understanding of DSM.
<b><u>INTEGRATION</u></b> Integration of biblical & theological concepts with counseling practices.	Strong	Students write position papers and take oral exams demonstrating their integration skills.
<b><u>SANCTIFICATION</u></b> Demonstrates a love for Triune God	Moderate	Students apply their biblical and theological knowledge